Interview Guide
&
Repository of Interview Questions
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Purpose

This guide provides practical information on conducting interviews. The guide discusses why interviews should have structure, what structure consists of, and how to conduct a structured interview. It also addresses the pros and cons of different types of interview questions and helpful/harmful interviewing techniques.

This guide is not intended to be exhaustive of the possible approaches to developing a structured interview, but to provide one effective method. This document contains sample interview questions sorted and categorized by skills competency. It is provided as resource to aid the Hiring Manager, or Search Committee in developing legally sound interviews. Interview questions must be related to selection criteria (i.e. Knowledge, Skills, Abilities and Experience) of the position.

Goal of Interviews

The goal of the interview is to:

- Expand and clarify the information provided on the application and resume
- Collect additional job-related information which will supplement information on the application and resume
- Determine the candidate’s “fit*” to the job

*“Fit” is defined by the skills, knowledge and abilities required to perform the duties of the position and the ability to work successfully within the organizational culture.

Developing a Structured Interview

The development of interview questions is a critical step in the hiring process. This is the primary means by which the candidate is given the opportunity to provide evidence of possessing the knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform the job. Well-prepared questions bring out useful information, save interviewing time and help to insure that all applicants are treated equally.

Committees are required to submit interview questions for review by Human Resources prior to scheduling interviews to check for legality, appropriateness, and to provide advice and suggestions.

Identifying Criteria to be Assessed by the Interview

The requirements of the job and the competencies necessary to perform them derive from the Human Resources approved position description. The California State University’s classification standard serves as a broad standard in which candidates must meet the Minimum Qualifications of the classification; Required and Preferred knowledge, skills, and abilities are specialized skills that are specific to the requirements of the position. These competencies will be assessed in the selection process and how each competency will be measured (e.g., using a written test or interview). Some of the criteria may be demonstrated through the assessment of candidate’s resume and application; others are
well-suited for assessment through an interview (e.g., oral communication, interpersonal skills).

**Interview Formats**

Interviews are typically used for one of two purposes at Sacramento State. First, the interview may be used as part of the formal selection process in which candidates are screened or ranked based on their scores (usually committee panel interviews). Second, a “selecting official’s or hiring manager interview” may be used to verify candidates’ qualifications for a job after they have been rated using other assessment methods, but prior to making a hiring decision. In a hiring manager’s interview, candidates’ responses are typically not scored.

**Structured vs Unstructured Interviews**

Employment interviews can be either *structured* or *unstructured*. Generally speaking, structured interviews ensure candidates have equal opportunities to provide information and are assessed accurately and consistently. Unstructured interviews should only be utilized during the hiring manager’s interview.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structured Interview</th>
<th>Unstructured Interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• All candidates are asked the same questions in the same order.</td>
<td>• Candidates may be asked different questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• All candidates are evaluated using a common rating scale.</td>
<td>• A standardized rating scale is not required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Interviewers are in agreement on acceptable answers.</td>
<td>• Interviewers do not need to agree on acceptable answers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Types/Categories of Questions To Ask**

Well thought-out, key questions will elicit the maximum amount of useful information from a brief conversation with the candidate. The purpose of most questions is to open up a topic for conversation or to confirm information. You should select and/or develop questions for each of the selection criteria.

There are different types of categories of interview questions that can be used to measure different aspects of the job competencies. Regardless of the categories of the interview questions, the questions should be:

- Reflective of competencies derived from the position description
- Realistic of the responsibilities of the job
- Open-ended
- Clear and concise
- Free of jargon

**A. Opening Questions**

The interview can be a stressful experience. In order to make applicants feel more at ease, the use of “ice breaker” questions is encouraged. In addition, it is helpful to engage the candidate in a brief “housekeeping” discussion so that he/she may become comfortable with the interviewers and the physical surroundings before the formal interview begins.
For example, interviewers can ask if the candidate had any difficulty reaching the campus or parking.

**B. Behavioral Questions**
These questions ask for examples of current or past performance, based on the premise that past behavior is the best predictor of future behavior. Phrase questions in the present or past tense, but not the future tense.

Example: “Describe an occasion where you misjudged a situation. How did you handle it?”

**C. Open-ended Questions**
These questions encourage applicants to express ideas and information they feel are important. Background information relevant to the position is explored related to experience, education, training, achievements, etc. Probing specific skill areas, as opposed to a broad-brush approach to questioning, generally produces better information on which to make fine distinctions among qualified applicants. Open-ended questions begin with: what, how, why, describe, explain, or tell me.

Example: “Describe your job-related experience.”

**D. Closed-Ended (Yes/No) Questions**
These questions are used to elicit a specific response or verify information already possessed by the interviewer. Their use should be limited because they result in minimal conversation and they do not customarily generate new information. Questions of this type often begin with: are, have, do, will, did, can, and could. Generally speaking, it is wise to follow up with an open-ended question.

Example: “Have you ever had budget management responsibility?”

After the candidate responds, follow up with a question such as:

“Tell us about extent of your budget authority and responsibility in your previous positions.”

**E. Neutral Questions**
These questions do not reveal or suggest the correct response. They encourage the candidate to express his or her own ideas as well as to provide unedited information. Neutral questions can encourage honesty and candor.

Example: “What, in your view, is more important—speed or accuracy?” “Why do you feel this way?”

**F. Direct Questions**
These questions are used to obtain very specific information. They are valuable for obtaining in-depth information or for asking follow-up questions on topics brought up by a candidate’s other responses.

Example: “What computer courses have you taken?”
G. **Situational Questions**
These questions provide a technique to evaluate the applicant’s ability to solve job-related problems or situations that may actually occur on the job. They are used to assess an applicant’s ability to recognize important aspects of situations or problems, analyze them and provide reasonable options or workable solutions. These questions ask the candidate to respond to new or unfamiliar situations and provide insight to the candidate’s ability to analyze and solve problems.

Example: “Assume you are the supervisor and your best employee starts to come in late several times a week. What would you do?”

H. **Skill-based Questions**
Skill-based questions should be related to the skills necessary to ensure success in the position. That objective can be accomplished by linking questions to the selection criteria. Refer to Questions Index for examples.

I. **Willingness Questions**
This establish whether an applicant is aware of the conditions of employment and is willing to accept them. Willingness to travel is an example, shift work another, willingness to work in a fast-paced environment, willingness to work extra hours. This is a way to reinforce the more prominent conditions of employment even if the applicant read them in the job announcement.

J. **Closing Questions and Statements**
Inclusion of several questions from this group will enable the interviewer to close the interview and provide “process” information to the applicant.

Examples: “Do you have any questions for us?” or “Thank you for your time and interest in the position. We will finish interviews by ____.”

**Types/Categories of Questions To Avoid**
There are types of interview questions to avoid because they are not useful in enabling interviewers to make decisions regarding the applicant’s knowledge, skills and abilities.

A. **Unimaginative Questions**
These questions sound “canned” and for which the applicant usually has a prepared answer. For example, “What would you like to be doing five years from now?”

B. **Multiple Questions**
These questions “run on” and require the applicant to answer a long, confusing series of questions.

C. **Obvious Questions**
These questions suggest a correct answer. These types of questions often reveal the answer the committee is looking for and help applicants create answers to fit those attitudes. For example, “This university wants employees who are creative and flexible. What kind of employee are you?”
D. Negative Questions
These questions reveal an unfavorable attitude toward an applicant or topic. For example, “You don’t have much experience in supervision, do you?”

E. Illegal and Non Job-Related Questions
See Legal Aspects of Interviewing for more information.

Legal Aspects of Interviewing

Equal opportunity and nondiscrimination laws protect the rights of individuals and specific groups based on race, color, religion, marital status, national origin, ancestry, sex, sexual orientation, disability (mental and physical) including HIV and AIDS, marital status, medical condition (cancer and genetic characteristics), status as a Vietnam-era veteran or special disabled veteran, age or citizenship (within the limits imposed by law).

As an Equal Employment Opportunity employer, Sacramento State wishes to avoid potential claims of discriminatory hiring practices. To ensure applicants do not believe they have been discriminated against during employment selection, the following is a reference of discriminatory, or potentially discriminatory interview questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Unacceptable Questions</th>
<th>Acceptable Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Any question expressing or implying a preference for a specific age group, particularly those that identify applicants over 40 years old.</td>
<td>Are you over 18 years of age? If hired, can you furnish proof of your age and date of birth?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race/National Origin</td>
<td>No reference to an applicant’s color or race is acceptable. What is the origin of your surname? Asking if applicants speak foreign languages based on physical/surname appearances.</td>
<td>Asking all applicants about one particular foreign language skills required in the job. Are you a U.S. citizen or can you furnish proof of your legal right to be employed in the United States?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrests/Convictions</td>
<td>Have you ever been arrested? Questions that do not relate to the job under consideration. Arrests do not necessarily mean guilt, and not all convictions are predictors of future job behavior.</td>
<td>None: this aspect of an applicant’s qualifications are to be ascertained by other means.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Why do you think a man/woman is best for this job? Can you supervise men/women? How well do you work with men/women who don’t like to work with other men/women?</td>
<td>What do you think are the abilities required for successful job performance? What has your supervisory experience been? How well have you worked with both men and women?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family/Transportation</td>
<td>Marital status, family plans, ages of children, child care arrangements, or references to spouse. With whom do you reside? Do you live with your parents, husband/wife, children? Do your relatives work? Do you own a car; make &amp; year?</td>
<td>Is there anything that would prevent you from meeting scheduled workdays/hours? Do you have relatives working at this company? Do you have a reliable means of transportation to ensure regular work attendance?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education/Experience</td>
<td>Do you have a high school diploma / college degree? Are you willing to take courses on your own time and at your own expense if you get this job? How many years have you been performing this work?</td>
<td>What educational coursework or special training have you had that provided you with the knowledge and skills to perform this job? What type of experience have you had performing this job-related work?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious/Political Affiliations</td>
<td>Any question that solicits information about the applicant’s religious or political beliefs/practices.</td>
<td>Is there anything that would interfere with your performing this job, working overtime or weekends (if required), or complying with University policies?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Condition</td>
<td>Do you have any physical disabilities? Have you ever had a job related injury? Have you ever filed a workers' compensation claim? Any questions about physical handicaps that the applicant may have or appears to have.</td>
<td>Do you have any physical conditions which may limit your ability to perform all of the physical demands of this job? Are you aware that employment may be contingent upon passing a physical exam?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial/Credit</td>
<td>Do you have any overdue bills? Have you ever had a wage garnishment? Do you own or rent? Have you ever filed for bankruptcy?</td>
<td>If appropriate to the job, this information can only be ascertained by other means. How long have you resided in this area?</td>
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</table>

**Examples of Questions and Analysis**

The following is a representative list of questions with a short analysis of each question to determine whether it is an unacceptable or acceptable question and why. It is not all-inclusive.

**A. How many children do you have?**

This question is inappropriate for two reasons.

First, questions regarding marital status, number of children and childcare arrangements are not appropriate because they may be seen as being based upon the applicant’s gender. Under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, it is unlawful to deny a female applicant employment because she has children or is planning to have a child at some future date. Second, this question is an inappropriate way of asking about an otherwise appropriate subject: availability to work.

Questions asked to availability to work should be job-related. For example: What hours can you work? What shift(s) can you work? Can you work on weekends and/or holidays? Are there specific times that you cannot work? Do you have responsibilities other than work that will interfere with specific job requirements such as traveling?

**B. What country are your parents from?**

You may not ask an applicant where he/she was born or where his/her parents were born. You may ask if the applicant is eligible to work in the United States. Under Title VII pre-employment inquiries concerning national origin are not considered violations of the law in and of themselves.
However, inquiries that either directly or indirectly disclose such information, unless otherwise explained, may constitute evidence of discrimination prohibited by Title VII. Some state employment practice laws expressly prohibit inquiries on employment applications concerning the applicant's national origin. In some states, it may also be considered illegal to seek related data, such as the birth, place of birth or citizenship of parents, which could indirectly reveal national origin.

C. What is your native language?
When an English language skill is not a requirement of the work to be performed, and an employer uses an English language proficiency test or requires English language proficiency, an adverse effect upon a particular minority group may result, creating a violation of Title VII.

It is also inappropriate to inquire how an applicant acquired the ability to read, write or speak a foreign language. However, if the job requires additional languages, an employer may legitimately inquire into languages the applicant speaks and writes fluently.

D. What is your height? What is your weight?
The EEOC and the courts have ruled minimum height and weight requirements to be illegal if they screen out a disproportionate number of minority group individuals or women, and the employer cannot show that these standards are essential to the safe performance of a job in question. See Davis v. County of Los Angeles, 655 F.2d 1334 (9th Cir. 1977), vacated and remanded as moot on other grounds, 440 U.S. 625 (1979); Dothard v. Rawlinson, 433 U.S. 321 (1977).

E. Have you ever been arrested?
Questions relating to an applicant's arrest record are improper, while questions of an applicant's conviction record may be asked if job-related. The EEOC and many states prohibit the use of arrest records for employment decisions because they are inherently biased against applicants in minority groups in other protected classes.

The EEOC has issued a Revised Policy Statement covering the use of conviction by employers in making employment decisions:

First, the employer must establish a business necessity for use of an applicant's conviction record in its employment decision. In establishing business necessity, the employer must consider three factors to justify use of a conviction record: (1) nature and gravity of the offense for which convicted; (2) amount of time that has elapsed since the applicant's conviction and/or completion of sentence; and (3) the nature of the job in question as it relates to the nature of the offense committed.

Second, the EEOC's Revised Policy Statement eliminated the existing requirement that employers consider the applicant's prior employment history, along with rehabilitation efforts, if any. The Revised Policy Statement requires that the employer consider job-relatedness of the conviction, plus the lapse of time between the conviction and the current job selection process.

F. Do you own your own home?
An interviewer should not ask if the applicant owns or rents a home or car, or if wages have been previously garnished, or if the applicant has ever declared bankruptcy, unless financial
considerations exist for the job in question.

Any employer who relies on consumer credit reports in its employment process must comply with the Fair Credit Reporting Act of 1970 and the Consumer Credit Reporting Reform Act of 1996.

G. Did you serve in the military? What type of discharge did you receive?
You may not ask what type of discharge the applicant received from a military service.

You may ask whether or not the applicant has served in the military, period of service, rank at time of discharge, and type of training and work experience received while in the service.

H. How old are you?
The Age Discrimination in Employment Act ("ADEA") prohibits discrimination on the basis of age with respect to individuals over the age of 40. Requests that an applicant state his age may tend to deter older applicants, and may otherwise indicate discrimination based on age.

Consequently, employment application forms which request information such as age will be closely scrutinized to assure that the request is for permissible purpose and not for purposes prescribed by the ADEA.

Permissible purposes are limited to when age requirement or limit is a bona fide job application or is based on reasonable factors other than age. Under the EEOC's Age Discrimination Interpretive Rules, requests for date of birth on the employment application are permissible, provided that an appropriate disclaimer is shown.

In addition, any recruiting effort that is age-biased, such as seeking “recent graduates” or any question during the interview process that deters employment because of age is unlawful.

I. What church do you go to? What religion are you?
There are no job-related considerations that would justify asking about religious beliefs or convictions unless your organization is a religious institution, in which case you may give preference to individuals of your own religion.

In addition, inquiries as to the applicant's religion are also not an appropriate method of determining availability to work. Employers have an obligation to accommodate the religious beliefs of employees and/or applicants unless to do so would cause undue economic hardship.

The EEOC has determined that the use of pre-employment inquiries that determine an applicant's availability have an exclusionary effect on the employment opportunities on persons following certain religious practices.

Thus, questions relating to availability for work on Friday evenings, Saturdays or holidays should not be asked unless an employer can show that the questions have not had an exclusionary effect on its employees or applicants who would need an accommodation for their religious practices, that the questions are otherwise justified, and that there are no alternative procedures which would have a lessor exclusionary effect. EEOC Guidelines on Discrimination Because of Religion, 29 CFR 1605.
J. Are you a United States citizen?
This question is not appropriate as a pre-employment inquiry.

The EEOC Guidelines on Discrimination Because of National Origin indicate that consideration of an applicant's citizenship may constitute evidence of discrimination on the basis of national origin.

The law protects all individuals, both citizens and non-citizens domiciled or residing in the United States against discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex or national origin.

A person who is a lawfully immigrated alien, legally eligible to work, may not be discriminated against on the basis of his/her citizenship, except in the interest of national security, as determined under a United States statute or a presidential executive order regarding the particular position or premises in question.

K. Do you have any disabilities?
The Americans with Disabilities Act ("ADA") prohibits employers from asking disability-related questions to employment applicants. A "disability-related question" is any question that is likely to elicit information about disability. Under the ADA, an employer cannot lawfully ask an applicant whether he has a particular disability nor ask questions that are closely related to a disability.

An employer, for example, generally may not ask an applicant whether the applicant will need reasonable accommodations for the job. An employer may not ask an applicant how many sick days he took with a previous employer; this question directly relates to possible disabilities.

An employer may not ask an applicant about his worker's compensation history. A question of this nature is viewed as relating directly to the severity of the applicant's impairments. An employer may not ask an applicant about his current or prior lawful drug use. For example, an employer cannot ask an applicant, "What medications are you currently taking?"

An employer may ask an applicant whether he can perform the essential functions of the job for which he is applying, with or without reasonable accommodation. Or ask applicants to describe how they would perform any and all job functions, as long as all applicants in the job category are asked to do this.

When an employer reasonably believes that an applicant will not be able to perform a job function because of a known disability, the employer may ask the applicant to describe or demonstrate how he would perform the function.

If the applicant has an obvious disability or voluntarily discloses a hidden disability to the employer, the employer may ask the applicant whether he needs reasonable accommodations and what types of reasonable accommodations he will need.

For example, an applicant for a receptionist's position voluntarily discloses that he has diabetes and will need to take breaks to take his medication. The employer may ask the applicant questions about the reasonable accommodations he will need, such as how often he will need to take breaks and how long the breaks must be.

An employer should inform all applicants of the essential functions of the position and of the employer's attendance requirements. The employer may then ask whether the applicant will be able to perform these functions and meet the attendance requirements. An employer may also
ask about an applicant's attendance record with a prior employer.

This question is not considered to be disability-related, because there may be many reasons unrelated to disability why a person may not have met the attendance requirements of a previous job.

L. When was the last time you used illegal drugs?
An employer may ask applicants about current and prior illegal use of drugs. An individual who is currently using illegal drugs is not protected under the ADA. For example, an employer may ask the following of an applicant: “Do you currently use illegal drugs? Have you ever used illegal drugs? What illegal drugs have you used in the last six months?”

These questions are not likely to tell the employer anything about whether the applicant is addicted to drugs. On the other hand, questions that ask how frequently the applicant has used illegal drugs are likely to elicit information about whether the applicant was a past drug addict. An employer may not ask questions that refer to past drug addiction.

M. Do you drink alcoholic beverages?
An employer may ask an applicant questions about his drinking habits, unless a particular question is likely to elicit information about alcoholism, which is a disability under the ADA. An employer may ask an applicant whether he drinks alcohol, or whether he has been convicted for driving under the influence of alcohol. These questions do not reveal whether someone has alcoholism.

On the other hand, questions about how much alcohol an applicant drinks or whether he has participated in an alcohol rehabilitation program are not permitted. Questions of this nature are likely to elicit information about whether the applicant has alcoholism.

N. Have you ever undergone psychiatric evaluation?
This is not an appropriate question.

The EEOC enforcement guidance on psychiatric disabilities limits the questions asked of any applicant about any psychiatric disability.

Under the ADA, the term, "psychiatric disability," includes mental impairments, such as any mental or psychological disorder including emotional or mental illness. It includes major depression, bipolar disorder and anxiety disorders such as panic disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder. A mental impairment also includes schizophrenia and personality disorders.

As with physical disabilities, an employer is not permitted to ask applicants any questions that are likely to elicit information about a psychiatric disability. A limited exception comes into play when the employer reasonably believes that an applicant has a psychiatric disability for which the applicant will require accommodation.

Generally speaking, an employer can only reasonably believe that an applicant will need accommodation if the applicant discloses his psychiatric disability to the employer during the hiring process or if the applicant tells the employer during the hiring process that he will need such accommodation.
Q. Are you dating anyone right now?
While this question may not be evidence of discrimination, interviewers should avoid questions of a personal nature. Personal questions are generally irrelevant to the hiring process, and may give rise to claims for invasion of privacy or sexual harassment.

There should be some direct correlation between the information requested and the applicant's ability to perform the functions of the job for which he is applying. If there is no legitimate business purpose for a question, don't ask it.

P. When did you graduate from high school?
This type of question can be considered an indirect inquiry as to an applicant's age and may create an inference of age discrimination. While such a question does not inherently violate the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, a more appropriate approach is to simply ask the interviewee if he or she has a high school diploma or equivalent.

Further, an employer must consider whether a high school education is necessitated by the duties and functions of the position for which applicants are being interviewed. The United States Supreme Court has found an employer's requirement of a high school education discriminatory where statistics showed that such a requirement operated to disqualify blacks at a substantially higher rate than whites and there was no evidence that the requirement was significantly related to successful job performance.

The standard applies to all groups protected under Title VII and to all questions related to educational achievement, if no job-related requirement or business necessity exists. While an employer may generally inquire as to the applicant's educational background, there must be some degree of relationship between the level of education required for the position and the job duties of the position.

Q. Do you have any family members who work here now or who have worked here in the past?
Information about friends or relatives working for an employer is generally not relevant to an applicant's competence.

Requesting such information may be unlawful if it creates a preference for relatives of current employees in the selection process and the composition of the present workforce is such that this preference reduces or eliminates employment opportunities for members of protected groups.

As a general rule, however, unless an adverse effect on women or minorities can be shown, nepotism is not illegal.

R. What clubs or organizations do you belong to?
As phrased above, this question is unacceptable because it could be seen as seeking information that is not job-related and which could relate to gender, national origin, religion or other status protected under Title VII.

It would be more appropriate to ask: "What professional or trade groups do you belong to that you consider relevant to your ability to perform this job?" This question would elicit similar information, but only to the extent that it is relevant to the job in question.
S. What is your maiden name?
This question could be seen as an inappropriate inquiry under Title VII because it indirectly asks a female applicant to disclose information regarding her marital status.

Questions about marital status are frequently used to discriminate against women and to deny opportunities for female applicants. If you need to contact a former employer, you may, however, ask all applicants if they have ever been known by any other name.

T. What is your race?
Title VII prohibits discrimination based on race and color. Again, pre-employment inquires concerning protected status are not considered violations of the law in and of themselves. However, this inquiry directly asks an applicant to disclose information regarding a protected characteristic, and, unless otherwise explained, may constitute evidence of discrimination prohibited by Title VII.

An employer may legitimately obtain information needed to create and implement an affirmative action plan, or to meet other government record keeping requirements, or even for the employer's own efforts to recruit minorities and/or women.

The information should be kept separate from other employee records to ensure that it is not used to discriminate in making personnel decisions. One means of collecting such data that has been approved by the courts is the use of a "tear-off sheet," which is an anonymous sheet that is separated from the application and used only for purposes unrelated to the selection decision.

If It's Not Job-Related - Don't Ask

Data on such matters as marital status, number and age of children, and similar issues, which could be used in a discriminatory manner in making employment decisions, but which are necessary for insurance, reporting requirements or other business purposes can and should be obtained if a person has been employed, not by means of an application form or a pre-employment interview.

It is reasonable to assume that all questions on an application form, or any pre-employment interview are for some purpose, and that selection or hiring decisions are made on the basis of the answers given.

When facing charges of discrimination, the employer bears the burden of proving that answers to all questions on application forms or in oral interviews are not used in making hiring and placement decisions in a discriminatory manner prohibited by the law.

The employer must establish that the questions do not seek information other than that which is essential to evaluation of an applicant's qualifications for employment. It is, therefore, in an employer's own self-interest to carefully review all procedures used in screening applicants for employment, eliminating or altering any not justified by business necessity.
APPENDIX A: Index of Interview Questions
Accounting and Payroll

Accounts Payable
1. How many invoices have you handled on a monthly basis?
2. What steps would you take before approving an invoice for payment?
3. What items of information do you need before you can approve an invoice for payment?
4. Tell us about your experience in accounts payable.
5. Tell us about an invoice discrepancy that you discovered and how you resolved the discrepancy.
6. Tell us about an invoice dispute that you were involved in and what your role was in resolving the dispute.
7. Tell us about your experience in accounts payable.
8. What is the difference between billable and non-billable expenses?

Accounts Receivable
1. To what extent were you involved in collections?
2. You’ve been asked to prepare a bill for services. What information should be included in the bill?

Audit
1. Tell us about your experience in conducting audits.

Cashier
1. What experience have you had as a cashier?

Cost Accounting
1. Tell us about your experience in cost accounting.
2. Describe some of the methods used to allocate support costs.
3. What is chargeback?
4. What is the purpose of chargeback?
5. Have you implemented or administered a chargeback system?
6. Name some components of an effective chargeback system.
7. What are fixed costs?
8. What are variable costs?
9. What is marginal cost?
Fixed Assets
1. What experience have you had in fixed assets accounting?
2. What are the various means of calculating depreciation?

Payroll
1. Based on Internal Revenue Service rules, what criteria distinguish a consultant from an employee?
2. What experience have you had in payroll?

Supervisory
1. How might quality problems manifest themselves in an accounting department?
2. What cost-cutting measures have you implemented?
3. Which accounting systems are you familiar with?
4. Identify some important steps to take during the conversion of an accounting system.
5. What percentage of discounts lost did you have in Accounts Payable?
6. Did the percentage increase or decrease under your supervision?
7. You been asked to prepare a training class for completing expense statements. What points will you emphasize to insure accurate expense statements are submitted?

Analytical Skills
1. Give us one example of your analytical abilities.
2. Tell us about your analytical skills.
3. Tell us about a particularly difficult problem that you analyzed and what was your recommendation.
4. What steps do you take when analyzing complex problems?
5. How would you rate your analytical ability? Why?
6. How would your manager rate your analytical ability?
7. Tell us about a situation where the analysis that you performed was incorrect. What would you have done differently?

Budget and Cost Control
Budget
1. What is a budget?
2. Your assignment is to assist the line organization to prepare the budget. A number of the line supervisors are new. What steps will you take to introduce the line supervisors to the process?
3. Provide us with an example of how "zero-based budgeting" would apply to the staffing in your organization.

4. What is the difference between a capital budget and an expense budget?

5. Name some typical operating expenses.

6. Why is it that the direct salary paid to an employee does not represent the total cost of the employee to the organization?

7. What experience have you had in developing a budget?

8. What is the purpose of a budget?

9. What are the steps involved in preparing a budget?

10. What is zero-based budgeting?

11. Have you conducted a budget review?

12. What are the benefits of budgeting?

13. How would you prepare a cost/benefit analysis for an automation system?

Cost Control

1. What are some of cost-cutting steps you could take to reduce fleet expenses?

2. Your expenditures for office supplies have increased by 50% over the past two years. What steps will you take to determine the reason for the increase?

3. What is the relationship between a cost accounting system and a budget?

4. What benefits does a cost accounting system provide?

5. You have been asked to recommend some criteria for reducing the budget. What criteria will you recommend for reducing the budget?

6. You have been asked to reduce the information technology budget. How will you do this?

7. You have been asked to reduce the training budget. How would you determine the reductions?

8. Your expenditures for office supplies have increased by 50% over the past two years. What steps will you take to control and reduce expenditures?

9. Overtime expenditures have increased over the past year. Yet, the workload has not increased. What steps will you take to control overtime?

10. You have been asked to reduce the staff for your organization by 10%. How will you go about this?
11. Cost reduction is often associated with budget reductions. What are some positive means of reducing costs?
12. What are the factors involved in a cost/benefit analysis?
13. What are the potential pitfalls when the variances of budget versus actual expenditures are expressed only as percentages?

Career Goals
1. Where do you want to be 5 years from now in your career?
2. What are your long term career goals?
3. What prompted you to take your current job?
4. Where do you see yourself 10 years from now?
5. Why did you make a career change?
6. Why do you want to leave your current position?
7. Five years ago, where did you see yourself today?
8. What is your career goal?

Closing Questions
1. Do you have anything to add?
2. Summarize by emphasizing your qualifications as they apply to this job. Also, cover anything that you missed from your opening.
3. Is there anything you’d like to address?
4. Have we missed something that you’d like to add?
5. Is there anything else?
6. Is there anything you would like to add?
7. Do you have any questions?
8. Do you have any closing comments?

Contract Administration
1. Contracts for consultant services normally have some provision for other associated expenses such as parking, travel, and meals. What are some of the ways to control these associated expenses?
2. What experience have you had in contract negotiations?
3. You have been asked to determine if a piece of equipment is on warranty. The only information you have is the serial number and the name of the company from which the equipment was purchased. From what sources could you determine if the equipment is on warranty?
4. What questions should you ask prior to hiring a consultant?
5. Tell us about a contract dispute that you were involved in and what your role was in resolving the dispute.
6. In which situations would you use a fixed price contract versus a price and time contract?
7. How often do you prefer to receive progress reports and why?
8. What controls, if any, should be placed on the use of subcontractors?
9. What factors would you consider in determining the appropriate hourly rate on a contract?
10. Name some contract administration tools that you can use to monitor progress and payments on a contract?
11. Tell us about a contract that you have successfully administered.

**Clerical / Secretarial Work:**

1. What word processing systems have you worked with, and what are the advantages and disadvantages of each?
2. Describe the kinds of telephone and receptionist duties you have had, being specific about the number of calls and walk-ins you received in a typical day.
3. Describe your past experience with scheduling appointments.
4. What are some of the most unusual clerical assignments you have been given?
5. What kind of filing systems have you used or created?
6. What kinds of decisions did you make on your own and what decisions did you refer to your supervisor?
7. What kinds of reports did you develop, create, or produce?
8. What kinds of correspondence have you written on your own initiative?
**Correspondence and Reports**

1. What experience have you had in preparing management reports?
2. Tell us about a management report you’ve made with recommendations and what happened once those recommendations were adopted?
3. What are the elements of a business report?
4. What are the elements of a business letter?
5. When writing an executive report, how should the text be structured for effective communication?
6. Tell us about reports you have prepared.
7. What experience have you had in performing analysis and preparing recommendations?
8. What are the elements of an effective management report?
9. What experience have you had in collecting data and writing reports based on that data?
10. Tell us about an analysis that you have performed and the recommendation(s) that you made as a result of your analysis?
11. Tell us about your experience in developing procedure manuals.

**Customer Service**

1. What are the steps involved in successfully handling an irate customer?
2. What does good customer service involve?
3. Tell us about how you have handled a dissatisfied customer in the past.
4. Tell us about your experience in dealing with the public. Include a situation where you provided exemplary service.
5. A citizen becomes irate because his permit application cannot be found. How will you handle the citizen?
6. A salesperson comes in to talk to your boss without an appointment. How will you handle the salesperson?
7. What do you think your customers would say about your work?
8. Give us an example of a situation you handled exemplifying superior customer service.
9. Tell us about a situation in which you dealt with a customer and what you would have done differently.
10. How would you handle a customer who used abusive language?
11. Tell us about your experience in working a public service counter.
12. A citizen calls in and states that one of your company's trucks ran over her mailbox. How will you handle the citizen?
13. Give me an example of the type of work experience you have had on a day-to-day basis with the public.
14. What has been your most rewarding experience dealing with the public/customers?
15. What "new way of doing things" did you introduce in your last job in dealing with the public?
16. What typical kinds of customer dissatisfaction were inherent in your last job? How did you deal with this? What types of things were you able to do to help in alleviating this customer dissatisfaction?
17. Give me an example of a time when you were able to help an angry customer with a problem.
18. How do you define great customer service?
19. What would others say about how you handle customers? Would they want you to wait on them? Did anyone ever ask for you?
20. What kind of recommendation would your previous supervisor give you regarding your customer relations skills?
21. Do you like working with the general public? Would you prefer to work alone?
22. Give me an example when you were praised for your people skills in a past job.
23. You have an angry customer that comes up to you. His/her past dealing with the department has been negative. This time he/she is going to get it done right. He/she demands you put him/her on top priority basis. Your department is now running a major project for your supervisor and can't accommodate this customer. How would you handle the customer?

Advanced
1. Name five criteria essential to establishing effective service standards, and why you think they are essential.
2. What are some of the ways to measure customer/user satisfaction?
3. What steps can you take to establish a "customer first" attitude in the organization?
4. In what ways can an organization transfer a "customer first" attitude to the Internet?
5. Tell us about the customer service training programs that you have implemented.
6. In what manner can business processes reinforce customer service training?
**Decision Making**

1. What type of decisions do you make in your current position?
2. What decisions are easiest for you to make and which ones are the most difficult?
3. Why?
4. What steps are involved in making a decision?
5. What items of information do you typically need before you make a decision?
6. Give us an example of your ability to make decisions under pressure.
7. Tell us about the worst decision that you've made on the job. What did you learn from the experience?
8. Tell us about the best decision that you've made on the job.
9. How would you rate a job that requires you to constantly make decisions?

**Delegation**

1. Provide us with an example of your ability to delegate work.
2. Is there a difference between assignment and delegation? If so, what is the difference?
3. What is the purpose of delegation?
4. What are the steps to successful delegation?
5. Under what circumstances may a person decide to delegate upward to their supervisor?
6. What are the benefits for the subordinate when a supervisor delegates?
7. What benefits does a supervisor receive from delegating work to employees?
8. What types of tasks can be delegated?
9. What types of tasks cannot be delegated?
10. Tell us about a task that you unsuccessfully delegated. What did you learn from this experience?
11. Tell us about the last major assignment that you delegated and why you delegated?
12. How do you decide what assignments to delegate to your staff?
**Discipline**

1. Have you ever terminated or suspended an employee?
2. Tell us about your most recent experience in disciplining an employee.
3. What do you find difficult in disciplining employees?
4. Name the steps involved in disciplining an employee.
5. Tell us about an employee that you've terminated.
6. What is progressive discipline?
7. What are the steps involved in progressive discipline?
8. What is the purpose of discipline?
9. To what extent, if any, should an employee’s good performance be considered in a discipline?
10. In order to properly document a discipline, what facts should be included in the documentation?
11. What role does documentation serve in the disciplinary process?
12. What factors should be considered when applying discipline?
13. Under what circumstances might a disciplinary action be overturned?
14. Have you ever had a discipline overturned? Why?
15. What are an employee’s rights under "Skelly"?
16. Under Skelly an employee has the right to see the charges and documentation behind the charges before being suspended or terminated.
17. What are the steps involved in the "Skelly Process"?

**Effective Communication**

**General**

1. How do you effectively communicate with others?
2. How important is listening to effective communications?
3. What are some of the characteristics of a good listener?
4. Tell us about a situation where you demonstrated good communications skills.
5. Tell us about a situation where you demonstrated poor communications skills.
   - What would you have done differently?
6. How would you rate your communications skills? Why?
Co-workers
1. What are some rules to follow to insure effective communications with your coworkers?
2. What are some of the means of communication in the workplace?
3. How would your co-workers rate your communications skills?

Supervisors
4. How can a supervisor establish effective communications with staff?
5. What means of communication may be used to effectively establish a new policy?
6. Are there additional considerations in communicating to groups of employees versus individual employees?
7. What are some good rules to keep in mind when directing employees?
8. In what instances, is written communication better than verbal communications?

With Your Supervisor
1. Communicating with your supervisor is an important aspect of all of our jobs. In addition to being brief, what guidelines should you follow to communicate effectively with your supervisor?
2. What are the reasons for communicating upwards to your superiors?
3. How would your supervisor rate your communications skills?

Experience and Education

Education
1. How does your experience and education qualify you for this job?
2. How does your education qualify you for this job?
3. Why did you choose to attend the college that you are attending?
4. What aspect of your education applies to this position?
5. What training have you received that qualifies you for this job?
6. What have you done outside of formal education to improve yourself?
7. What training opportunities have you taken advantage of and why?
8. What additional training will we have to provide for you if we hire you?
Experience

1. Tell us about yourself. Focus on the aspects of your experience that apply specifically to the position that you're applying for.
2. How are you qualified for this job?
3. How does your current job qualify you for this position?
4. How has your current position changed from the day you started until now?
5. How does your experience qualify you for this job?
6. Describe a typical day at your present position.
7. What were your three greatest accomplishments on your last job?
8. What are some of the things on your current job you have done well?
9. What is the most difficult assignment you have had?
10. What accomplishment on the job are you the most proud of?
11. What steps have you taken to improve your job skills?
12. What significant contributions have you made to the operation of your work group?
13. How has your current position prepared you to take on greater responsibilities?
14. What makes you more qualified than the other candidates?
15. Why do you want to leave your current job?
16. How has your job prepared you to take on greater responsibility?
17. Tell us about your qualifications for this position.
18. What actions have you taken in the past 5 years to prepare you for this position?
19. What steps have you taken in the past two years to improve your qualifications?
20. In the areas where your experience falls short for this job, what steps will you take to make up for this shortfall?
21. Recall an incident where you made a major mistake. What did you do after the mistake was made? What did you learn from this mistake?
22. What is the greatest failure you've had? What would you have done differently?
23. What action on the job are you the least proud of?
24. Tell us about a difficult situation that you encountered and how you resolved it.
Resume
1. Take us through your resume.
2. What are you most proud of on your resume?

Filing and Records Management

Filing
1. What are the different ways to organize a filing system?
2. Here's the basics; date, subject, and alphabetical. The files for your office consist of general correspondence, purchase orders, and employee files. How will you organize these files?
3. What experience have you had with establishing file systems?
4. How would you organize a file of general correspondence documents?
5. One of your responsibilities in this position is to type letters. If your assignment included filing the letters, how would you file them?
6. Have you done filing before and how did you arrange the files?
7. Did you set up the filing system?

Records Management
1. What are the benefits of records management?
2. What are the components of an effective records management program?
3. What types of records would be ideal candidates for optical imaging?
4. What is the purpose of a records retention schedule?
5. What types of records would be considered as vital records for an organization?
6. What are records?
7. What are the legal implications associated with a records management program?
8. What steps are involved in determining the retention period for records?
9. Name the factors to consider in determining the appropriate retention period for records.
10. Name the risks of having an ineffective records management program.
11. What actions can you take to facilitate the retrieval of records?
12. Tell us about your experience in managing off-site records storage?
13. Have you managed off-site records storage or did you use a contract facility?
14. What are the critical service requirements in using a contract facility for off-site records storage?
Interpersonal Skills
1. What do you think your supervisor would say about your work?
2. What do you think your coworker would say about your work?
3. What would your boss say about you - both positive and negative?
4. What would your subordinates say about - both positive and negative?
5. What would your co-workers say about you - both positive and negative?
6. What three keywords would your peers use to describe you?
7. What one thing would your boss say that he or she has the greatest problem with you?
8. Describe a situation in which your work was criticized? Describe the situation and how you responded to the criticism.
9. How would your subordinates describe you?
10. Tell us about the last time you lost your temper?
11. What situations make you lose your temper?
12. Tell us about the worst supervisor you’ve worked under.
13. Tell us about the best supervisor you’ve worked under.
14. Tell us about a confrontation that you’ve had with a coworker.
15. How do you maintain an effective working relationship with your coworkers?
16. How would your best friend describe you?
17. How would your worst enemy describe you?

Sound Judgment
1. In instances where you are required to assert yourself, what do you do to assert yourself effectively?
2. Describe for us your ethics.
3. Relate to us a confrontation that you've had with your supervisor. Who was wrong and why?
4. Relate to us the last time you dealt with an ethical question on the job and how did you handle the situation.
5. What did you do the last time you were asked to submit a report that due to time and resource constraints, compromise quality?
6. Tell us about a situation that would exemplify your integrity.
7. Describe a politically sensitive situation that you were in and how you handled the situation.
8. Tell us about a situation where you made a mistake. How did you handle the mistake and what was the resolution?
9. Under what circumstances should you bypass your supervisor and go to your supervisor’s supervisor?
10. Give us a situation that illustrates your ability to exercise good judgment.

**Leadership**
1. Define leadership?
2. What personal qualities should a leader have?
3. What is your strongest leadership skill and how will it assist you for this job?
4. Provide us with an example of your leadership ability.
5. Discuss the different styles of leadership.
6. Name some of the circumstances under which a leader will fail.
7. What is the importance of leadership in the organization?
8. What role does leadership play for a supervisor or manager?
9. What have you done to develop your leadership skills?
10. What is the difference between a leader and a manager?
11. Tell us about a situation in which you demonstrated your leadership ability.

**Motivation**

**Entry Level**
1. One of the requirements for this position is that the individual be a self-starter. Give us an example of your ability to be a self-starter.
2. How do you motivate yourself to complete unpleasant assignments?

**Advanced**
1. What motivational techniques do you use with your work unit?
2. What can a supervisor do to enhance an employee’s job and the employee’s motivation?
3. What motivates employees?
4. Name some of the ways that a supervisor can demotivate staff.
5. What are some of the ways in which a supervisor can motivate staff?
6. Tell us about a situation where you motivated your staff to extraordinary accomplishments.

**Performance Measurement and Benchmarking**

1. What is benchmarking?
2. What experience have you had in benchmarking?
3. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of benchmarking a government agency to the public sector and benchmarking to the private sector.
4. What are the keys for implementing a performance measurement program?
5. What are some of the means by which performance can be measured?
6. What requirements should be met in order to measure performance?
7. What does "best practices" mean?
8. How would you communicate the implementation of performance measurements so as to not panic staff?

**Personal Qualities**

**Confidence**

1. How confident are you that you can successfully perform the duties of this position and why?
2. Tell us about a situation that would demonstrate the level of confidence that you have in yourself.
3. Tell us about a situation that would demonstrate the level of confidence your manager has in you.
4. Tell us about a situation that would show the confidence your coworkers have in you.

**Creativity**

1. Are you creative? Give us one example of your creativity.
2. Describe a situation where you came up with a creative solution to a problem.
Independent/Self-Starte
1. Provide us with an example of your ability to work independently.
   Give an example. The example may relate what you did in an emergency situation. If this is an entry-level position, use an example from school, church, or other volunteer activities.

Pressure
1. What experience have you had in pressure situations?
2. Tell us about a pressure situation you were in that would demonstrate your ability to work under pressure.
3. Provide us with an example of how you’ve asserted yourself in an emergency or high-pressure situation?
4. What does it take to get under your skin?
5. What are some constructive methods of dealing with stress?
6. Why are manhole covers round?

Responsibility
1. Briefly describe the most significant responsibility you have had in your career and what it taught you?
2. How do you handle responsibility?

Risk
1. How do you deal with risk on the job?
2. Name the greatest risk that you've taken?
3. Name the greatest risk that you've taken which resulted in failure.

Personal Qualities - Situations
1. You are sitting next to a coworker who is consistently rude to others over the telephone. You realize that no one is aware of this. How would you handle this situation?
2. You are given a new assignment, but not given any instructions. How would you go about completing your assignment?
3. A vital piece of equipment requires repair. You are the only mechanic certified to repair the piece of equipment. You receive a call that your father is on his way to the hospital. What will you do?

4. Your co-worker continually comes over to your desk to complain about management. Your supervisor seems to be paying particular attention to the two of you. How will you handle this situation?

5. An executive manager has given you an assignment that will require you to work late tonight. However, you have dinner and expensive tickets to a show with your spouse tonight. What will you do?

6. You’ve prepared a report for the county supervisors. All facts have been documented, checked, and double-checked. However, one of the supervisors states that the report is wrong and demands that the report be corrected. What is your response to the supervisor?

7. A vendor comes in to thank you for assistance in clearing up a past due invoice. The vendor offers you two tickets to a ball game. What will you do?

8. Your co-worker is consistently unconcerned with issues at work. You and your co-worker have a joint assignment, but the co-worker just shrugs you off. What steps will you take?

9. As you’re walking out of the building, you notice an employee from another section carrying department equipment to their car. The equipment is clearly labeled and belongs in your section’s work area. What will you do?

10. You work on a field crew using heavy equipment. After lunch you notice the smell of alcohol on your co-worker’s breath. How will you handle this situation?

11. One of the members of your team only does what is absolutely necessary at work. His performance is impacting the team. How might this person’s performance affect your work?

12. Would you work overtime to complete a team project?

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**Planning and Strategy**

**Entry Level**

1. How do you plan your work?

2. What is the importance of planning your work?
Advanced

1. What are the elements included in strategic planning?
2. How will you insure that the implementation of a plan is consistent with the objectives of the plan?
3. What are the steps involved in developing goals and objectives?
4. What is the relationship between goals and planning?
5. How would you go about establishing a mission statement for the organization that you supervise?

Presentations

1. What experience have you had in making presentations?
2. You have been asked to address a citizens group regarding a particularly sensitive environmental issue. What steps will you take to ensure your success?
3. What steps can you take to insure a successful presentation?
4. Your assignment is to present a technical presentation to lay people. What steps can you take to insure that your presentation is easily understood?
5. Name the characteristics of an effective presentation?
6. What techniques do you use when faced with a hostile audience?
7. What factors influence the success of a presentation?
8. What is the purpose of audiovisual aids in a presentation?
9. Which audiovisual aids have you found to be the most effective and why?
10. Tell us about the most difficult presentation that you have made?
11. To what extent have you used presentation software such as PowerPoint in preparing and presenting presentations?
12. What steps do you take to handle reporters effectively?

Prioritization

1. You are given a number of assignments. How will you prioritize the assignments?
2. After returning from lunch, you find five telephone slips from customers requesting that you return their telephone calls. How will you prioritize your return telephone calls?
3. Along with your other assignments, you’ve been given a rush assignment that has to be done. What adjustments or considerations will you make in trying to complete the rush assignment?

4. In your supervisor’s absence you have been asked to schedule the work of the group for the next two weeks. How would you schedule projects, assignments, and vacations?

5. To perform your duties more efficiently and reduce interruptions, what steps should be taken when given a new assignment?

6. Your new assignment is to establish a working area for one professional and two clerical employees. What would you consider in laying out the work area?

7. On what basis should a supervisor schedule and assign work?

8. What is the importance of prioritizing work?

9. How do you prioritize your work?

10. Your section supervisor has given you a rush assignment. The assignment is in conflict with an assignment that was given to you by the section supervisor’s boss. How will you handle these assignments?

**Policies and Procedures**

1. What is the difference between policies and procedures?

2. Tell us about your experience in implementing a new procedure?

3. How can you involve staff in changing and implementing the revised procedure?

4. Tell us about your experience in implementing a new policy and what the result of the implementation was?

5. What are the steps in developing a new procedure?

**Problem Solving**

1. Provide us with an example of your problem-solving ability.

2. What are the essential elements of effective problem solving?

3. Tell us about a situation in which you were required to analyze and solve a complex problem.

4. How have you incorporated collaborative problem solving in your organization?

5. What are the benefits of collaborative problem solving?
**Process/Project Management & Design**

1. Tell us about your experience in implementing a new process?
2. How can you involve staff in changing and implementing the revised process?
3. Tell us about your experience in implementing a new process and what the result of the implementation was?
4. What are the steps involved in streamlining a process?
5. Your assignment is to make a process more efficient and cost effective. What methods might you use?
6. What experience have you had in flowcharting?
7. What actions would you take to simplify work?
8. What are the steps involved in reengineering a process?
9. You have been asked to provide your organization with guidelines on reengineering or simplifying business processes. What guidelines will you recommend?
10. What are the most common goals of reengineering efforts?
11. Name some commonly made mistakes in reengineering efforts.

**Productivity and Quality**

1. Define productivity. How is productivity measured?
2. What are the principles behind continuous improvement?
3. Looking only at output and costs, under what circumstances would productivity fall?
4. Looking only at output and costs, under what circumstances would productivity rise?
5. Name some of the means by which productivity can be improved.
6. What steps can be taken to insure quality in any operation?
7. What are the objectives behind "Quality Circles"?
8. What is "Total Quality Management" or "TQM"?
9. What measures would you implement to encourage employee involvement in a quality improvement program?
10. What is "benchmarking" and what are the benefits of benchmarking?
11. What is ISO 9000 and how can it support our quality efforts?
Safety
1. What are the elements of a successful safety program?
2. You’ve been given the assignment of evaluating a safety program. How will you go about your evaluation?
3. What are the components of an injury and illness prevention program?
4. How would you implement a safety program?
5. Name some typical causes of accidents in the office.
6. Name some typical causes of accidents in a shop environment.
7. What experience have you had in responding to OSHA complaints?
8. What is the purpose of the OSHA log (Form 200)?
9. How would you go about investigating an accident?
10. What steps can you take to reduce the number of accidents in an organization?
11. What actions can you take to communicate and reinforce safe work practices for field employees?

Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths
1. Why should we hire you?
2. What are your three greatest strengths?
3. What can you contribute to our organization?
4. Assume that you are a candidate in the coming general election. Tell me why you are the best candidate in the field.
5. What is your greatest strength?
6. We’ve interviewed a number of highly qualified students for this position. What sets you apart from the others?
7. What are your strengths?
8. What part of your current job are you the most comfortable with?
9. What are your strong points and how have they helped you to succeed?

Weaknesses
1. What is your greatest weakness?
2. Name your three greatest weaknesses.
3. Which is the worst of your three greatest weaknesses and why?
4. What are your weaknesses?
5. What part of your current job are you the least comfortable with?
6. What are your weak points and how have you overcome them?
7. What about yourself would you want to improve
8. In which area do you need to make the improvement in?

Supervision and Management

Experience
1. What experience have you had in supervision?
2. What is the role of a supervisor?
3. What experience have you had in resolving grievances?
4. What experience have you had in investigating discrimination/sexual harassment complaints?
5. What do you like the best about supervision?
6. What do you like the least about supervision?
7. What has been your most positive experience in supervision?
8. What has been your most negative experience in supervision?
9. Which aspect of supervision did you feel the least/most comfortable with?
10. Give us an example of a situation that you handled which would demonstrate your ability to supervise.
11. Have you had any experience in applying the provisions of the Americans With Disabilities Act?
12. Having supervisory experience you may have run into problems with a member of your staff. What type of problem did you encounter and how did you handle it?
13. What aspect of supervision is easiest/most difficult for you and why?
14. Tell us about your most difficult supervisory experience and how did you handle it?
15. Tell us about your most difficult supervisory experience and what did you learn from it?
16. Have you hired staff? What qualities did you look for?
17. Tell us about your experience in supervising clerical staff.
18. What experience have you had in supervising field workers?
19. Tell us about your experience in supervising professional staff.
20. Tell us about your experience in supervising technical staff.
21. Have you had an opportunity to supervise staff in a number of different functions, such as professional and clerical? Tell us about your experience.
22. Have you supervised volunteers? Tell us about your experience.
23. Under which circumstances would you refer an employee to the employee assistance program?
24. What is the most challenging situation that you’ve had with your subordinate supervisors? How did you handle it?
25. How would you assess your ability as a supervisor?
26. How would you assess your ability to work with medical staff?
27. Tell us about your experience with employees and substance abuse.

Knowledge
1. What is the purpose of a performance appraisal?
2. What is the most important quality a supervisor should have?
3. An employee approaches you with a sexual harassment-related problem. In your discussion with the employee, what items of information will be of the most importance?
4. What are the characteristics of an effective supervisor?
5. What qualities make for a good boss?
6. What steps can a supervisor take to improve the capabilities of staff?
7. How should an assignment be made to an employee?
8. What is a grievance?
9. What are a supervisor’s responsibilities under Affirmative Action?
10. What can a supervisor do to communicate the organization’s affirmative action policy?
11. What is grievable under the grievance procedure?
12. What is authority?
13. What is responsibility?
14. What are the keys for obtaining results from brainstorming?
15. How would a supervisor evaluate an administrative employee’s performance?
16. What are the three most common weaknesses of managers and supervisors?
17. What is management?
18. What is supervision?
19. What is the difference between management and supervision?
20. Why is feedback important?
21. What are some of the ways in which an employee starts to behave that usually indicate a potential problem?
22. What guidelines should be followed in counseling an employee?
23. Name the major sources of conflict in organizations.
24. Describe the process by which conflict in an organization should be addressed.
25. What are the five functions of a supervisor?
26. What considerations should be made in establishing organizational goals for your unit?
27. What actions can a supervisor take to insure that subordinates support the mission and goals of an organization?
28. What are the differences in supervising union personnel versus non-union personnel?
29. Would you manage consultants any differently than the way you would manage your own professional staff?
30. Name three means by which employees may be recognized for excellent performance.
31. Name the situations in which a supervisor should use a direct order.
32. What are some of the actions a supervisor can take to encourage creativity in the office?
33. Vacations during the holidays are popular among employees. Describe the actions a supervisor can take to insure that service levels are unaffected during these times.
34. What are the guidelines to follow in constructively criticizing an employee?
35. Under what circumstances does an employee become a "problem employee?"
36. From a supervisory standpoint, what is the difference between a grievance and a discrimination complaint?
37. What are some of the signs that your staff may be suffering from burnout?
38. What is the importance of communicating expectations to staff?
39. Why is it necessary for a supervisor to act decisively?
40. What is the relationship between responsibility and authority?
41. How can a supervisor mitigate the effect of change on employees?
42. Name some of the forces that can drive change in an organization.
43. What are the steps involved in making a supervisory decision?
Situations

1. Two employees come to you about a verbal disagreement. One says the incident happened one way, and the other employee has a different story. There are no other witnesses. What will you do?

2. You have an exemplary employee who suddenly starts coming in late. How will you handle this situation?

3. You supervise a group of employees, one employee complains that the office is too hot, another employee complains that the office is too cold. How will you handle this?

4. An employee complains that you gave another employee a benefit that the employee did not receive. He states that this is not fair. How will you handle this employee?

5. A supervisor from another group comes to you and complains that your employee visits the other group constantly and disrupts the work. What steps will you take?

6. An employee from another group comes to you and complains that your employee visits the other group constantly and disrupts the work. What steps will you take?

7. An employee is not performing the assigned tasks correctly. As the supervisor what will you do?

8. An employee continues to make careless mistakes. How will you address the situation?

9. You notice that an employee is continually on the telephone for personal telephone calls. What steps will you take?

10. Your organization does not have a dress code. However, one of your employees continues to come to work in inappropriate attire. How will you handle this situation?

11. An irate citizen calls regarding one of your employees who was speeding on the expressway. What steps will you take regarding the employee?

12. A work stoppage has just concluded. A number of employees participated in the work stoppage, while others came to work. To insure that your organization continues to work effectively, what steps can you take?

13. Your employee complains that an employee from another group has been coming over and disrupting work. How will you handle this complaint?
14. An exemplary employee starts to become listless at work, misses deadlines, comes in late, and takes extended breaks. As the supervisor what action will you take?

15. It’s your first day on the job. Your new job includes the supervision of 10 employees. What is the first thing you will do?

16. You smell alcohol on an employee. What will you do?

17. Your employee operating a piece of heavy equipment appears to be under the influence. What action will you take?

18. Two of your staff are involved in a verbal altercation in your office area. How will you handle this situation?

19. One of your employees is using derogatory language on a telephone call. You and a number of your staff hear the employee. What will you do?

20. If you pursue disciplinary action, what will the charges be?

21. During a routine audit, you find that the timekeeper credited herself with more overtime than was actually worked. How will you address the situation?

22. One of your employees does not get along with his coworkers. The employee seems to be always in a bad mood and doesn’t socialize. How will you handle this employee?

23. New management has overturned a process that you championed and implemented. How will you inform your staff of the change?

24. You ask one of your staff to deliver some mail to another facility. The staff member refuses citing the rainy weather. How will you handle the refusal?

25. You’ve been appointed as the new supervisor for your group. The others in the group have more seniority and two of them also interviewed for the position you’ve been appointed to. How will you approach your new assignment?

26. Your most reliable employee comes to you and tells you that her job has become boring and unchallenging. She tells you that she’s considering transferring to another section. What is your response?

27. As you review an employee’s performance rating, the employee suddenly slams his fist on the table and starts to berate you. How will you handle this situation?

28. Another section has been reassigned to your supervision. The work of this section while related is different from the work in your section. What steps will you take as you begin to manage these sections?
29. Historically, your staff has worked a standard 5-day, 8-hour shift. Consistent with county policy, staff has requested a flex schedule. How will you handle their request?

30. Your staff works on an alternative work schedule, the 9/80. Under the 9/80 there is a fixed day off. Your employee requests a floating day off due to personal court appearances for non-Department business. How will you handle the situation?

31. Your office is responsible for staffing a service counter. Lately you’ve noticed that your employees are finishing their breakfast after the counter opens. What will you do?

32. You have announced that your organization will be filling a supervisory position. One of your employees who is eligible for the position has started to vie for your attention and to bring you donuts in the morning. Other employees and supervisors have commented on this employee’s behavior. What action will you take?

33. One of your employees constantly has people at his desk. The people are not employees and do not appear to have business with your department. How will you address this situation?

34. An employee has started selling cosmetics as a second job. The employee is taking orders at her desk both in person and over the telephone during lunch. What will you do?

35. Two of your employees have developed a romantic relationship. They are openly affectionate in the office. How will you handle the situation?

36. You’ve made an assignment to one of your most competent employees. The employee comes to you and states that the assignment is outside of their job description and that they will not do the assignment without first speaking with the union. What will you do?

37. The customer service representative for one of your vendors has complained about one of your employees harassing her. The employee has made comments on her appearance, shown up at her office, and given her small gifts. How will you address the situation?

38. After checking on one of your crews in the field you drive to another location. Upon your return to the crew, you’re informed that one of the crew was picked
up in a private vehicle and left. The employee who left simply said that they were gone for the day. What actions might you take?

39. Your employee consistently turns in incomplete assignments. The employee either doesn’t do some of the work or fails to complete the work. What will you do?

40. One of your employees is consistently late. When you talk to the employee, the employee says that it isn’t his fault because the bus is always late. What steps will you take to correct the situation?

41. Your employee always finishes her work early and does an excellent job. However, once she’s finished you notice that she has a tendency to socialize and works on her personal business. How will you handle the situation?

42. You discover that one of your better employees was arrested during their vacation. The employee has not returned to work. What action will you take?

43. You will be leaving on a three-week vacation in two days. What will you do to insure that your organization operates smoothly in your absence?

44. One of your employees has become a chronic complainer. What if anything will you do?

45. Your employee is constantly talking and laughing loudly in the office. The employee’s behavior is beginning to disrupt the work. How will you address the situation?

46. A customer calls and complains that your employee has been rude and abrupt with her. What action will you take?

47. One of your employees has been under tremendous stress at home. The employee’s performance has started to suffer. What will you do?

48. Your employee comes to you and states that his ex-girlfriend has been calling him continually at work. She has threatened him and he believes that she is stalking him. How will you address the situation?

49. Another supervisor forwards a voicemail from one of your trusted employees. In the voicemail the employee states that if the supervisor can’t convince you to approve overtime, then the employee will do the work on straight time, but if anything goes wrong it’s your fault. Will you speak to the trusted employee about the voicemail? And if so, what will you say?
50. One of your employees tells you that another employee has a weapon in their possession at the work site. What will you do?

**Supervision of Subordinate Supervisors**

**General Questions**
1. How will you insure that the appropriate directives and communications that you give to your subordinate supervisors are communicated to their employees?
2. How can you insure understanding and consistent application of your policies by your subordinate supervisors?
3. What tools do you employ to hold your subordinate supervisors accountable for the performance of their groups?
4. The new subordinate supervisor you've hired has never supervised before. What steps will you take to prepare the new supervisor to meet the challenges of supervision?
5. What steps do you take to insure effective communications with your subordinate supervisors?

**Situations**
1. As a manager with a number of subordinate supervisors, one of the employees consistently bypasses your subordinate supervisor and brings issues and problems directly to you. What action, if any, will you take?
2. You've just appointed a new supervisor for your best section. The section has nearly perfect attendance and consistently produces the most work with the fewest mistakes. The supervisor states that work takes priority and that only essential conversations should take place. What will you do?
3. A subordinate supervisor directs an employee to correct a potentially unsafe action. The employee refuses. What is your direction to the supervisor?
4. One of your subordinate supervisors without talking to you has taken a personnel issue to your supervisor. What will you do?
5. You've been told by a number of staff that one of your subordinate supervisors is documenting everything that you do. What actions, if any, will you take?
6. You've initiated a major change in policy in your organization. One of your subordinate supervisors is resisting the change to the point where their resistance may influence other employees. What actions, if any, will you take?
7. Another supervisor has told you that one of your subordinate supervisors made a sexually oriented comment to a new employee. What course of action will you take?

8. You’ve noticed that the quality and timeliness of work is beginning to slip in one of your sections. What actions, if any, will you take with the subordinate supervisor in charge of this section?

9. Your subordinate supervisor has implemented a policy that contradicts a policy that you issued for all your sections. How will you resolve this contradiction in policies?

10. During an all hands meeting, two of your subordinate supervisors begin to accuse one and another’s employees of sabotaging an important work process. How will you handle the situation?

11. As opposed to working together, two of your subordinate supervisors appear to operate as if they are in heated competition. Are there any actions that you would take?

12. An employee of one of your subordinate supervisors has come to you complaining about a romantic relationship between the supervisor and another employee in the group. How will you address the situation?

13. A number of employees have complained to you about your subordinate supervisor for playing favorites. What actions will you take?

14. Your subordinate supervisor has great difficulty in making decisions. It appears that the secretary is making the majority of decisions in the section. What will you do?

15. In implementing a new process your subordinate supervisor has requested to replace the existing personal computer with new personal computers for the entire staff. The upgrade in computers was not budgeted. How will you respond?

16. It has come to your attention that a subordinate supervisor made an unauthorized purchase. Although the purchase was necessary to produce a routine report, the purchase is against department policy. Will you take any action?

17. One of your subordinate supervisors has started to throw their weight around with the employees. To the best of your knowledge, the performance of the unit has not been affected. What action, if any, will you take?
18. High absenteeism and high turnover characterize one of your sections. What will you do?
19. One of your subordinate supervisor’s employees argues with every change in procedure. Your subordinate supervisor is beginning to take these arguments personally and getting extremely upset. How will you work with your subordinate supervisor?

**Teamwork**

**Entry Level**
1. What are the characteristics of a successful team?
2. Tell us about an unsuccessful team of which you were a member. What, if anything, could you have done differently?
3. Tell us about a successful team of which you were a member. What was the most outstanding characteristic of that team? What did you contribute?
4. What are the important qualities a person should have to become an effective team member?
5. What qualities do you have that make you an effective team player?
6. Do you work better by yourself or as part of a team?
7. What can you contribute to establish a positive working environment for our team?
8. What type of people do you work best with?

**Advanced**
1. What factors would you consider in assembling a project team?
2. Name some of the pitfalls to be avoided in building an effective team.
3. Through what tools can a committee become more useful or productive?
4. What actions can a supervisor take to establish teamwork in the organization?
5. You supervise a group of civilian employees. Your employees appear to be at odds with the uniformed personnel. What steps can you take to improve the teamwork between civilian and uniformed personnel?
6. What are the advantages, if any, of establishing team goals as opposed to individual goals?
Telephone & Receptionist Skills
1. What is the importance of greeting the customer politely on the telephone?
2. In taking a message for another employee, what information should be included on the message?
3. Another department calls for your supervisor. Your supervisor is on the telephone. How will you handle this call?
4. A citizen calls and is irate because she has been transferred to three different departments and cannot get anybody to answer her question. How will you handle the call?
5. What telephone techniques are important when serving as a receptionist?
6. As a receptionist you are responsible for answering the telephones. What would you do if four lines were ringing at the same time?
7. Your supervisor is on the telephone. An outside organization calls and when you inform your supervisor, he simply says "Handle it". What will you do?
8. The supervisor returns after lunch and says that the information on the call slip you took is incorrect. How will you handle this?
9. What are the basic rules for answering the telephone?
10. Pick up the telephone within three rings, greet the caller, give your name and ask if you may be of assistance.
11. What are the basic rules for putting a customer on hold? Ask the customer if it's ok to place them on hold, wait for an answer, tell the customer why they being placed on hold, give a time frame, and thank them when you return.
12. Name the steps to correctly transfer a customer call.
13. Name the steps to correctly take a message in a coworker's absence.

Training and Employee Development
Entry Level
1. How would you go about training a new employee?
2. What are the steps to take in identifying training requirements?
3. Aside from formal training, what other means may be used for developing employees?
4. What factors would you use in evaluating a trainee?
5. You have one slot available for a personal computer training class. There are two people who have asked to be scheduled. Which factors will you consider in deciding which one of the two people will be scheduled?

6. What is the impact on the organization of inadequate employee training?

Advanced

1. You have been asked to develop the training budget. How will you develop the training budget?

2. Name the methods available for delivering training to employees.

3. In which situations would distance learning be preferable to instructor-led training?

4. Under what circumstances, might you recommend computer-based training instead of instructor-led training?

5. Have you performed a needs assessment?

6. And, if so, what steps did you take?

7. What are the benefits of providing just in time training?

8. You have been asked to develop a training program. What steps will you take in developing the training program?

9. What are the elements of a successful training program?

10. What topics would you include in a supervisory development training program?

11. What items of information should be included in the orientation training for new employees?

12. What is "distance learning"?

13. What role can "distance learning" play in the development of our employees?

Working Effectively With Others

1. Tell us about your inter-personal skills.

2. What experience have you had working with external agencies?

3. How do you deal with conflict?

4. Tell us about a situation in which you were required to work with people at various levels within your organization?

5. What was the most important step that you took to work effectively with these people?

6. To what extent have your assignments required interface with other departments?
7. Tell us about an incident in which you dealt with an irate customer, which would demonstrate your ability to work effectively with others?

8. In what kinds of situations do you find it most difficult to deal with people?

9. Describe to us the extent to which you have worked with executive or top management.

10. What has been your experience in working with community organizations?

11. Tell us about your experience in working with volunteers.

12. To what extent have you worked in an ethnically, socio-economically, and/or culturally diverse community?

13. Tell us about your experience in dealing with a variety of different people.

14. How do you handle difficult people?